

Palm Pilots plainly praised

Shawnee High School students head for Florida to show off computers.

By Ann Weaver, Staff Writer

SHAWNEE — Members of a Shawnee High School delegation are packing their handheld computers and heading to Florida for a national education summit this month to demonstrate the need for the devices in schools.

Shawnee High School English teacher Sharon Davis and four of her students will be in Orlando, Fla., July 11-14 at the U.S. Secretary of Education's No Child Left Behind Summit on instructional technology.

Lawmakers and education representatives from across the United States will attend the summit to get a look at and brainstorm about new technology to use in schools.

Shawnee High School students Jamelle Payne, Marco Del Moral, Jonathan Lindsey and Lisa Jackson will be on the program with their demonstration of the equipment.

The teenagers are four of the more than 350-student test group at the high school to have the hand-held computers during the latter part of the past year.

The units were purchased with a \$220,000 federal Personal Access Learning Success grant awarded last year to Shawnee Schools with help from U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Warr Acres.

Lynda Nichol, the school district's director of technology, said no district funds were spent on the project.

With the appropriation, 400 M130 Palm Pilots were bought for the freshman class and about a dozen Zire model Palm Pilots, with more memory capability, were issued to teachers. Keyboards, software, printers and teacher training also were paid for with the grant.

Nichol said the cost per student equaled about \$300, far cheaper than outfitting a student with the traditional tools.

Davis, a 22-year veteran of teaching, said handheld computers are sharpening students' problem-solving and communication skills. They encourage students to be flexible, she said.



FILE PHOTO BY STEVE SISNEY, THE OKLAHOMAN Lisa Jackson, Shawnee High School, demonstrates use of a hand-held computer.